

**From:** [Graham, Amy](#)  
**To:** [Biesecker, Michael](#); [StClair, Christie](#)  
**Cc:** [Press; Gray, David](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Superfund  
**Date:** Friday, September 1, 2017 3:07:15 PM

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Michael – Here is our statement:

**“EPA is focused on the safety of those affected by Hurricane Harvey and providing emergency response support - not engaging in attempts to politicize an ongoing tragedy.” -- Liz Bowman, EPA spokesperson**

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Off the record - also wanted to share the following article:

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**Daily Caller**

<http://dailycaller.com/2017/08/30/consensus-still-no-connection-between-global-warming-and-floods/>

**CONSENSUS: Still No Connection Between Global Warming And Floods**

By Michael Bastasch, 8/30/17

As scientists and media pundits debate human activity’s role in Hurricane Harvey, a new study finds no evidence global warming increased flooding over North America and Europe.

A study [published](#) in the Journal of Hydrology found “the number of significant trends in major-flood occurrence across North America and Europe was approximately the number expected due to chance alone.”

In fact, the study only adds to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) 2013 findings that there’s little to no evidence of increased flooding across the world amid rising temperatures. IPCC findings are regarded as scientific “[consensus](#)” by most climate scientists.

“The results of this study, for North America and Europe, provide a firmer foundation and support the conclusion of the IPCC that compelling evidence for increased flooding at a global scale is lacking,” reads the study by an international team of scientists.

The team, led by U.S. Geological Survey scientist Glenn Hodgkins, examined data from hundreds of flood gauges, looking at periods from 1931 to 2010. What they found was flooding was more correlated with decadal natural ocean cycles than long-term global climate change.

“Generalizations about climate-driven changes in floods across large domains or diverse catchment types that are based upon small samples of catchments or short periods of record are ungrounded,” the study found.

The study’s findings support data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). About 60 percent of locations where the EPA measures flooding show a decrease in “magnitude and intensity since 1965,” [according to University of Colorado professor Roger Pielke Jr.](#)

Pielke also found that [flood damage has been declining](#) as a proportion of the U.S. economy since 1940 — that way you control for population growth and development.

Scientists predict man-made warming from greenhouse gas emissions will increase the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, like rainfall and storms. That, in turn, could increase flooding.

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, scientists and media pundits have debated the storm's connection to global warming. Climate scientist Michael Mann [argued](#) that while human activity didn't "cause" the storm, sea level rise and higher ocean temperature made it more severe.

Harvey made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane Friday night. Rescuers have evacuated thousands of people from flooded homes, and at least 20 people have died.

A New York Times editor [urged readers](#) to ignore science and realize global warming played a role in Harvey's destructiveness.

The IPCC has found no significant upward trend in hurricanes, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists [warned](#) it was "premature to conclude that human activities ... have already had a detectable impact on Atlantic hurricane or global tropical cyclone activity."

Whatever the validity of Mann's argument, the Houston area experienced record levels of rainfall and thousands of residents had to flee their homes as the flood waters closed in. southeastern Texas and southern Louisiana have gotten about 25 trillion gallons of rain.

New Orleans officials worried they would be inundated with flooding for the second time in as many weeks after a water pump broke as Harvey turned north. The [city was spared](#) the worst of Harvey's rains, however, and there hasn't been much flooding.

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**From:** Biesecker, Michael [mailto:MBiesecker@ap.org]

**Sent:** Friday, September 1, 2017 3:39 PM

**To:** Graham, Amy <graham.amy@epa.gov>; StClair, Christie <StClair.Christie@epa.gov>

**Cc:** Press <Press@epa.gov>; Gray, David <gray.david@epa.gov>

**Subject:** RE: Superfund

In 2012, EPA conducted a nationwide assessment of the increased threat to Superfund sites poised by climate change, including rising sea levels and stronger hurricanes. Of the more than 1,600 sites reviewed as part of the study, 521 were determined to be located in 1-in-100 year and 1-in-500 year flood zones. Nearly 50 sites located in coastal areas could also be vulnerable to rising sea levels.

The report lists two dozen Superfund sites that were determined to be the most vulnerable to flooding and sea-level rise associated with climate change. One of those, the Bailey Waste Disposal site in Bridge City, Texas, is currently under about 20 feet of water.

As part of its review, has Administrator Pruitt's Superfund Task Force reviewed this issue?

Pruitt himself has called climate scientists predictions of stronger storms "alarmist." Has Hurricane Harvey has any impact on his views?

Please provide on-the-record comment. I am writing on deadline for today.

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**From:** Graham, Amy [<mailto:graham.amy@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 01, 2017 1:53 PM  
**To:** Biesecker, Michael; StClair, Christie  
**Cc:** Press; Gray, David  
**Subject:** RE: Superfund

That's correct. We will begin to assess other sites after flood waters recede in those areas.

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**From:** Biesecker, Michael [<mailto:MBiesecker@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 1, 2017 1:09 PM  
**To:** Graham, Amy <[graham.amy@epa.gov](mailto:graham.amy@epa.gov)>; StClair, Christie <[StClair.Christie@epa.gov](mailto:StClair.Christie@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Press <[Press@epa.gov](mailto:Press@epa.gov)>; Gray, David <[gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Superfund

When does EPA expect it will be able to visit and assess flooded sites in Houston and Port Arthur?  
After the floodwaters waters recede?

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**From:** Graham, Amy [<mailto:graham.amy@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 01, 2017 1:04 PM  
**To:** Biesecker, Michael; StClair, Christie  
**Cc:** Press; Gray, David  
**Subject:** RE: Superfund

Michael - Unified Command personnel inspected two Superfund sites in the Corpus Christi area yesterday. Both the Falcon Refinery Site and the Brine Service Site show no significant damage. No emergency clean up response for storm damage is needed at the two sites.

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**From:** Biesecker, Michael [<mailto:MBiesecker@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 1, 2017 12:14 PM  
**To:** StClair, Christie <[StClair.Christie@epa.gov](mailto:StClair.Christie@epa.gov)>; Graham, Amy <[graham.amy@epa.gov](mailto:graham.amy@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Press <[Press@epa.gov](mailto:Press@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Superfund

Christie, Amy,

Following up from earlier in the week, AP is still seeking details on what EPA is doing regarding flooded Superfund sites. EPA's press release on Wednesday said EPA is "assesses conditions at the

NPL Superfund sites in the storm's impact area" and was "began rapid assessments at two sites that are accessible after floodwaters have receded and this work will continue."

Which sites were those? What did EPA find? Did EPA take samples to determine whether contaminants leached out into floodwaters? Were more sites visited and assessed on Thursday? How many people has EPA assigned to this work?

I will add that AP has visited three Houston-area superfund sites yesterday. All were still heavily flooded and we saw no state or federal personnel there (or anyone else). We are visiting and documenting more sites today.

Michael



## ASSOCIATED PRESS

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"There are only two forces that can carry light to all corners of the globe – the sun in the heavens and The Associated Press down here." – Mark Twain, 1906

"I go with Custer and will be at the death." – AP reporter Mark Kellogg's final dispatch from the Battle of the Little Bighorn, 1876

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